

# MAYOR & COUNCIL AGENDA COVER SHEET

**MEETING DATE:**

October 11, 2004

**CALL TO PODIUM:****RESPONSIBLE STAFF:**

**David B. Humpton**  
**City Manager**

**AGENDA ITEM:**

(please check one)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Presentation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proclamation/Certificate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appointment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Hearing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic District
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consent Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ordinance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resolution
<input type="checkbox"/>	Policy Discussion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Work Session Discussion Item
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

**PUBLIC HEARING HISTORY:**

(Please complete this section if agenda item is a public hearing)

Introduced	
Advertised	
Hearing Date	
Record Held Open	
Policy Discussion	

**TITLE:**

Presentation on the Revised Montgomery County Public Schools Student Grading and Reporting Policy

**SUPPORTING BACKGROUND:**

At the Mayor and City Council's request, the City Manager invited representatives from Montgomery County Public Schools to brief (20-30 minutes) the Mayor & Council on the Revised MCPS Student Grading and Reporting Policy. In attendance for this work session will be Don Kress, Chief Schools Performance Office, and Dr. Karen Harvey, Director of the Department of Curriculum Instruction.

I have attached some information regarding the Revised Grading Policy from the MCPS website for your review.

**DESIRED OUTCOME:**

**Receive briefing/question and answer period**



## INTRODUCTION

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF TEACHING IS THE COMMUNICATION LOOP BETWEEN THE TEACHER AND STUDENT. The teacher communicates to instruct. The student communicates to ask questions, seek clarification, and signal understanding, and the teacher responds accordingly. As the student attempts to apply skills or concepts, the teacher communicates to provide feedback, so the student can improve with practice.

Grading and reporting provides one important way teachers can communicate with their students. Teachers grade their students' achievement to tell students how they are doing. Teachers also report on students' actions that help or hinder learning, so students can make productive changes.

This guide will assist teachers as they balance their two roles in the classroom—coach and evaluator—in order to help every student meet instructional expectations.

The ultimate goal of this guide, and the policy upon which it rests, is to align grading and reporting practices with the curriculum and assessments of Montgomery County Public Schools and the state of Maryland. Grades must show students, parents, and the school system where students stand at each step along their way to graduation, so students can be challenged and supported immediately, as needed. In this way, all students will reach the end of Grade 12 ready for the demands of college and career.

### Background

ON MARCH 24, 2003, THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVED A REVISION OF THE EXISTING GRADING POLICY, Policy IKA, *Grading and Reporting*, first approved in 1986 and most recently revised in 1993. The revision makes the system's grading and reporting policy congruent with recent system initiatives, particularly new or revised standards based curriculum and assessments as required in the *Curriculum Policy* (IFA, 2001).

On January 13, 2004, the Board of Education approved a phased-in implementation of the policy, to begin July 1, 2004. On May 11, 2004, the Board approved initiating the first phase of policy implementation in Grades 1–8 during school year 2004–2005 and in Grades 1–12 during school year 2005–2006. Table 1 outlines the full implementation plan approved by the Board of Education. This option allows high school principals the 2004–2005 school year to prepare school communities for policy implementation.

#### POLICY IKA

*The Board of Education is committed to maintaining rigorous performance and achievement standards for all students and to providing a fair process for evaluating and reporting.*

### Implementation

IN THIS PLAN, GRADES 1–8 TEACHERS IMPLEMENT THE MEANING OF THE GRADE TO REFLECT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ONLY and report learning skills separately during school year 2004–2005. Report cards for Grades 1–8 have been revised slightly to allow teachers to report learning skills.

During school year 2005–2006, Grades 9–12 teachers will implement the meaning of the grade to reflect student achievement only and will report learning skills separately. Report cards for Grades 9–12 will be revised slightly to allow teachers to report learning skills.



COMPLETELY REVISED REPORT CARDS WILL BE INTRODUCED YEAR BY YEAR, through school year 2008–2009. During the years new report cards are introduced in Grades 1–8, teachers will begin grading to grade level expectations in Grades 1–5 and course expectations in Grades 6–8. In addition, in each of the years new report cards are introduced in Grades 1–8, new grading procedures will be implemented for students with Individual Education Programs (IEP), 504 Plans, or English Language Learner (ELL) Plans, and for students identified as Gifted and Talented (G/T).

**Table 1: Implementation of Policy IKA *Grading and Reporting***

<b>2004–2005</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 1–8 implement academic meaning of grade and report learning skills separately. Grades continue to reflect performance on objectives set for individual students.</li> <li>• Grades 9–12 prepare school community to implement academic meaning of grade and report learning skills in 2005–2006.</li> </ul>
<b>2005–2006</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 9–12 implement academic meaning of grade and report learning skills separately.</li> <li>• Grades 1–2 grade to standard with new report card (grade level expectation).</li> <li>• Grades 1–2 begin procedures for students in special populations.</li> </ul>
<b>2006–2007</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 3–5 grade to standard with new report card (grade level expectation).</li> <li>• Grades 3–5 begin procedures for students in special populations.</li> </ul>
<b>2007–2008</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 6–8 grade to standard with new report card (course expectation).</li> <li>• Grades 6–8 begin procedures for students in special populations.</li> </ul>
<b>2008–2009</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grades 9–12 grade to standard with new report card (course expectation).</li> </ul>

### Implementation Alignment

THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION in May 2004, aligns the implementation with four important interests of MCPS:

- Implementation aligns with curriculum development. New or revised report cards will be developed and implemented after new or revised curriculum has been implemented.
- Implementation aligns with parent and student outreach. MCPS is communicating with parents and students to ensure understanding of the policy and how it will be applied in classrooms. The communication will continue throughout all phases of implementation. This guide—available to administrators, teachers, parents, students, and members of the business and higher education communities—serves as part of that communication effort.
- Implementation aligns with professional development. MCPS is training teachers, principals, and all school and central services staff. This professional development will continue throughout all phases of implementation.
- Implementation aligns with procedures for students with disabilities or identified as English Language Learners or Gifted and Talented.

Table 2 shows how the policy will be implemented and the timing for developing new or revised report cards at each level, year by year.



**Table 2: Implementation Details, 2004–2006**

2004 – 2005	<b>Academic Meaning</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–8</i> teachers apply the 2003 grading and reporting policy as it pertains to the academic meaning of the grade. Teachers assign grades as reflecting student achievement only and will report information about students' learning skills separately. To support observing and reporting learning skills, Grades 1–8 teachers use learning skills rubrics in their classrooms as they work with students.</p> <p><i>Grades 9–12</i> teachers prepare to implement the policy in 2005–2006.</p>
	<b>Level of Expectation</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–8</i> teachers continue to apply the 1993 policy and the 1996 regulation as they pertain to the level of expectation, "Grades are based on evidence of the attainment of the instructional and performance objectives assigned to the student." This means that teachers in Grades 1–8 continue to assign students objectives according to each student's level of skill, knowledge, and readiness. It also means these teachers grade students on how well they meet those individual objectives.</p> <p><i>Grades 9–12</i> teachers and teachers of high school courses in middle school will continue to apply the 1993 policy and the 1996 regulation as they pertain to the level of expectation for high school courses, "Grades are based on evidence of the attainment of the instructional and performance objectives for the course." Teachers of high school courses continue to grade students on how well they meet course objectives.</p>
	<b>Special Populations</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–12</i> teachers continue to use current procedures for students with disabilities, students identified as Gifted and Talented, or students limited in English proficiency.</p>
2005 – 2006	<b>Report Cards</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–2</i> teachers will implement a new report card.</p> <p><i>Grades 1–2</i> teachers who are teaching the Fundamental Life Skills curriculum will implement a new report card.</p>
	<b>Academic Meaning</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–12</i> teachers will apply the 2003 grading and reporting policy as it pertains to the academic meaning of the grade. They will assign grades as reflecting student achievement only and will report information about students' learning skills separately. To support observing and reporting learning skills, Grade 1–12 teachers will use learning skills rubrics in their classrooms as they work with students.</p>
	<b>Level of Expectation</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–2</i> teachers will apply the 2003 grading and reporting policy as it pertains to the level of expectation reflected in the meaning of a grade. Grades will provide an "accurate reflection of student achievement compared to grade level expectations outlined in the curriculum, as demonstrated on assessments and teacher designed tasks."</p> <p><i>Grades 3–8</i> teachers will continue to apply the 1993 policy and the 1996 regulation as they pertain to the level of expectation, "Grades are based on evidence of the attainment of the instructional and performance objectives assigned to the student." This means that teachers in Grades 3–8 should continue to assign students objectives according to each student's level of skill, knowledge, and readiness. It also means these teachers should grade students on how well they meet those individual objectives.</p> <p><i>Grades 9–12</i> teachers and teachers of high school courses in middle school will continue to apply the 1993 grading and reporting policy and the 1996 regulation as they pertain to the level of expectation. The regulation states, "Grades are based on evidence of the attainment of the instructional and performance objectives for the course."</p>
	<b>Special Populations</b>	<p><i>Grades 1–2</i> will apply new procedures for students with disabilities or identified as Gifted and Talented or limited in English proficiency. <b>Note: Details of these procedures will be provided to staff, students, and parents during school year 2004–2005.</b></p> <p><i>Grades 3–12</i> will continue to use current procedures for students with disabilities, students identified as Gifted and Talented, or students limited in English proficiency.</p>



Table 3: Plans for Grading Students in Special Populations, 2004–2006

2004 – 2005	<b>Academic Meaning</b>	In <i>Grades 1–8</i> the changes will focus upon the academic meaning of a grade. Learning skills, such as effort and behavior, are not included in the grade, but are reported separately. Teachers will continue to instruct and grade students on achievement of objectives set for individual students. Grading procedures do not change in Grades 9–12 and high school staff will prepare for changes in 2005–2006.
	<b>Level of Expectation</b>	Grades for students receiving special education services will continue to reflect students' progress towards achievement of their Individual Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives, as well as any modified grade level instruction.
	<b>Professional Development</b>	Professional development for general and special educators will be provided to prepare for changes affecting students with disabilities, 504 plans, limited English proficiency, or Gifted and Talented identification. In addition, during fall 2004, Module VI: <i>Grading and Reporting Special Populations</i> will address how teachers will grade to standards for special populations enrolled in Grades 1 and 2 during the 2005–2006 school year.
2005 – 2006	<b>Level of Expectation</b>	<i>Grades 1 and 2</i> will implement a new report card and will report grades based on grade-level expectations.
	<b>IEP Procedures</b>	A standards-referenced IEP is under development that will be used for students in <i>Grades 1 and 2</i> during 2005–2006.  <i>For Grades 1 and 2</i> students receiving special education services, the IEP team will determine the extent to which they are evaluated on the grade level expectations.
	<b>ESOL Procedures</b>	For ESOL students in <i>Grades 1 and 2</i> , the English Language Learner (ELL) committee will determine the extent to which ESOL students are evaluated on the grade level indicators.
	<b>Report Cards</b>	<i>Grades 1 and 2</i> report cards will indicate instructional adjustments to grade level for all students in special populations. If an adjustment has been made, the report card will reflect the student's actual instructional level and achievement of indicators in reading and math. Training will provide more detailed information.
	<b>Fundamental Life Skills</b>	A separate report card will be implemented for <i>Grades 1–2</i> students accessing the Fundamental Life Skills (FLS) curriculum. Because all students should be working toward standards, a separate report card in the new reporting system will strengthen the existing relationship between the FLS curriculum and the instruction that students receive based on their IEP.
	<b>Rollout</b>	The rollout of procedures for grading students in special populations and the rollout of the FLS report card will follow the same schedule for report cards approved by the Board of Education on May 11, 2004.



## Implementation With Special Populations\*

TEACHERS WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE STUDENTS DOCUMENTED ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT, AND LEARNING SKILLS AS REQUIRED BY LAW. In addition, teachers will continue to differentiate instruction to challenge and support all students. This differentiation includes all the effective practices teachers use to vary delivery of content, processes used by students and teachers, the manner in which students show what they know and can do, and the products used to demonstrate learning.

The 2003 grading and reporting policy states teachers must provide “opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of grade level or course expectations outlined in the curriculum through a variety of methods.” This statement means teachers must be aware of all students’ learning styles and multiple intelligences and the need to assess all students in many modes.

The policy statement also means teachers must be clear about what they intend and do not intend to assess. For example, when a teacher plans to assess *understanding of a concept*, students may show their understanding in many ways. They do not have to write to show understanding. They *may* write, but they also may develop a graphic organizer, draw a model, participate in a discussion, engage in a simulation, or perform a skit—all of which may demonstrate a student’s understanding. In the same way, if a teacher plans to assess *a skill such as writing*, the teacher will need to require the student to use that skill.

Table 3 on the facing page identifies the details for grading and reporting with special populations.

\* The term *special populations* refers to a group of students including those identified as having a disability, limited English proficiency, or as being Gifted and Talented.



## What Is Standards Based and What Is Not?

A STANDARDS BASED GRADING AND REPORTING SYSTEM IS A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DESIGNED TO GIVE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ABOUT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AS IT RELATES TO SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS.

In MCPS, revised curriculum documents list content standards and define what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade or course in all disciplines. These documents align with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) standards and assessments. MCPS courses based on curriculum that has not been revised reflect state, national, and/or international standards. A standards based grading and reporting system gives students and parents feedback throughout a school year about how well students are meeting standards and how well prepared students are for county, state, and national assessments.

When teachers ask the question above, they often mean, “What is a standards based grade and what isn’t? How do I know when a student has or hasn’t met a standard?” These questions relate to performance standards and proficiency targets, which are clearly pertinent to standards based grading. It is important to note that teachers will not be assigning standards based grades until they implement the new, standards based report card, following the implementation timeline provided in Table 1 in the Introduction.

Until new report cards are developed and implemented, teachers will continue to grade students in Grades 1–8 on achievement of objectives set for individual students. In high school courses, teachers will continue to grade students on achievement of course objectives.

When new, standards based report cards are implemented, teachers will be provided tools they need to assign standards based grades. The tools will come within a monitoring system that includes

- procedures for collecting, analyzing, and evaluating evidence of student learning.
- monitoring tools for recording student performance in clusters of indicators.
- model summative assessments.
- model formative assessments.
- exemplars.
- performance standards.
- proficiency targets.

### What are Performance Standards? What are Proficiency Targets?

These questions relate to the next phase of the policy implementation, which begins in 2005-2006 and will follow the implementation timeline. You are encouraged to think about these questions and engage in discussions related to evidence of student learning. During 2004-2005, you will be invited to participate in professional development and range-finding sessions to determine performance standards and proficiency targets in specific disciplines. In addition, proficiency levels will be set for grade levels and courses as the system implements standards based report cards.

## **MCPS Bulletin Article: Grading & Reporting**

### **"Standards-based grading and reporting implementation begins"**

This school year begins the first phase of a five-year plan for implementing a new standards-based grading and reporting policy for Montgomery County Public Schools. The new grading and reporting practices are designed to be fair and meaningful and support rigorous performance and achievement standards for all students.

The Board of Education approved the revised policy IKA, Grading and Reporting, on March 23, 2004, to ensure consistency in grades throughout the school system and alignment with MCPS and state curriculum and assessment. The policy offers a strong foundation for providing feedback to students, parents and MCPS.

In a standards-based grading and reporting system, grades reflect achievement of what students are expected to know and do, as defined by MCPS curriculum (academic meaning of a grade).

When the new standards-based report cards are implemented, year-by-year, beginning with Grades 1 and 2 in 2005-2006, teachers will be provided with the tools needed to assign standards-based grades:

- Procedures for collecting, analyzing and evaluating evidence of student learning.
- Monitoring tools for recording student performance.
- Proficiency targets.

This year, learning skills (effort and behavior in Grades 1-5 and effort and task completion in Grades 6-8) will be reported separately from academic grades. Teachers will use rubrics to guide conversations with students, observe patterns and trends in students' learning skills and report students' learning skills.

In Grades 1-8, teachers can use homework in two different ways. Homework that is for practice will be reported as a learning skill, separate from the grade. Homework may also be included as a grade after a concept is taught and students are given time to practice and receive feedback.

Another important piece of the new grading and reporting policy pertains to late work and grading scales. Teachers across grade level or course teams should set and communicate due dates and deadlines to students in advance. Late work procedures do not apply to tests, quizzes or daily homework and class work assignments.

If an assignment is late (not handed in by the due date), teachers may drop the assignment no more than the equivalent of one letter grade, or one increment (4, 3, 2, 1, 0). If a student does not hand in an assignment by the deadline (the last date a teacher will accept an assignment), teachers may record the grade at the bottom of the grading scale used, e.g., E on A-E scale, 0 on 4-0 scale, and 50 on a 100-point scale.

Whatever grading scale teachers are using, increments must be equal throughout the scale. For example, the increments on the four-point letter scale and number scale are equal throughout. Each grading symbol is one point apart from those on either side. In a percentage system, the revised grading and reporting policy uses 90-100 (A), 80-89 (B), 70-79 (C), 60-69 (D) and 50-59 (E), because a wider increment for an E would skew a student's grade heavily toward failure.

The procedures for late work and the guidelines for grading scales are meant to encourage students to take responsibility, and to maintain and build student motivation and achievement.

During the 2004-2005 school year, high schools will participate in discussions to understand what will happen during the 2005-2006 school year when they begin to implement the new grading and reporting policy. Discussions will relate to academic grades, learning skills, homework, effort, participation, extra credit, late work and attendance. Ken O'Connor, an internationally known expert



on grading and reporting, will work with high school principals this year to ensure a smooth transition in implementing the new grading and reporting policy.

An important component of implementation is ongoing communication with all stakeholder groups. Plans for communicating with parents include a parent brochure, parent video, quad cluster and MCCPTA meetings, and a grading and reporting hotline. In addition, a live call-in program, "Viewpoint," will air this fall on MCPS Cable Channel 34.

MCPS will continue to communicate information to administrators, teachers and students through articles in the Bulletin, school newsletters and school websites. Professional development also will continue for administrators and teachers as training Modules VI - VIII are developed.

Meetings are scheduled in October for teachers in Grades K-1 to obtain feedback on revised report cards for students in Grades 1 and 2, which will be implemented during the 2005-2006 school year. Plans also are under way to have an e-mail hotline for teachers during report card preparation week.

A primary source of information on grading and reporting can be found on the web at <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/info/grading/>.

### **Current Status of Grading and Reporting**

This year, MCPS must review grading and reporting practices and, where necessary, bring those practices into alignment with the 1993 policy and regulation that are currently in effect.

In addition, the system will engage in a substantive discussion about how practices can be aligned with the pending 2003 policy, to be implemented starting next July.

Implementation of the pending 2003 policy will be phased in over a multi-year period. The Board of Education unanimously approved the implementation plan developed by a multi-stakeholder group and presented at the January 13, 2004 Board meeting. Staff will update the Board on progress toward implementation at a June, 2004 meeting.

Two multi-stakeholder committees will work throughout the implementation period: an advisory committee and a development committee. Each committee will seek input from the other committee and from all constituencies in MCPS.

The implementation plan shows how grading and reporting practices align with

- Curriculum revision
- Development of new report card(s)
- Procedures for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency
- Staff development
- Parent and student information and outreach

The implementation plan approved by the Board of Education is outlined in the following table:

<b>Policy Implementation and Reporting System Roll-Out</b>					
<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>
	<b>Partial Policy Implementation on Grades 1-12</b> (academic meaning of grade*)	<b>Complete Policy Implementation on Grades 1-12</b> (grade level/course expectation**)			
Develop rubrics for learning skills (non-academic indicators)	Report learning skills (nonacademic indicators)				

	Develop procedures for identified populations	Implement procedures for identified populations			
	Develop Grades 1-2 report card	Implement Grades 1-2 report card			
		Develop Grades 3-5 report card	Implement Grades 3-5 report card		
			Develop Grades 6-8 report card	Implement Grades 6-8 report card	
				Develop Grades 9-12 report card	
					Implement Grades 9-12 report card
<p>*Academic meaning of grade only refers to meaning of grade symbol on report card that gives information about student achievement only, as outlined in MCPS curriculum; other information about learning skills such as effort will not be included in the grade, but will be reported separately.</p> <p>**Grade level/course expectations refer to the standards for the grade or course in which a student is enrolled or assigned.</p>					

As the school system works to align grading and reporting practices to the 1993 policy and regulation in effect this year and works to prepare for implementing the pending 2003 policy, it will be important to understand the similarities and differences between the 1993 and 2003 documents.

The following table compares the language of each set of documents on key points. The only difference between the 1993 and 2003 documents lies in the level of expectation reflected in grades assigned to students in Grades 1-8. There is no difference in the level of expectation for high school courses. The academic meaning—which prohibits including effort, participation, attitude, and behavior to determine a grade for Grades 1-12—is consistent between the two sets of documents.

This year, teachers and schools may implement any aspect of the pending 2003 policy that is consistent with the 1993 policy and regulation in effect. This year, teachers and schools must implement the level of expectation for grades in Grades 1-8, as defined in

the 1993 policy and regulation.

In Effect (93)	Pending (03)
Grades based on assessment of classroom objectives based on MCPS program of studies.	Grades represent accurate reflection of achievement as outlined in the curriculum
In Grades 1 – 8, grades based on evidence of attainment of instructional and performance objectives assigned to the student.	In Grades 1-5, grades based on grade level expectations. In Grades 6-8, grades based on course expectations.
In Grades 9 - 12, grades based on evidence of attainment of instructional and performance objectives for the course.	In Grades 9 – 12, grades based on course expectations.
Grades are not to be adjusted by personality, social achievement, deportment, attention in class, submitting assigned work on time, and other work study habits.	Grades reflect achievement only.
Advance notice to parents and students about grading criteria	Advance notice to parents and students about grading criteria
Frequent feedback to parents and students	Frequent feedback to parents and students
No forced curves	No forced curves